

APPPOINTMENT WITH SEVEN

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## PREFATORY NOTE

APPOINTMENT WITH SEVEN presents the first collection in book form of work by: Peter Chilvers, Max Chapman, Silvia Dobson, W. E. R. Bell and Mark Holloway.

Roger Burford makes his contribution in the "poems and documents" form he evolved for himself in his previously published book of poems. An acknowledgment is due to White and White for permission to reprint one poem from Roger Burford's *Poems and Documents*.

Oswell Blakeston and Max Chapman, Silvia Dobson and W. E. R. Bell, share sections as the editor feels that, in both cases, one poet contributes to the other.

Grateful thanks for permission to reprint some poems in this volume are due to the editors of the following publications: *Poetry Quarterly*, *Modern Reading*, Hogarth's *Poets Of Tomorrow*, *Poetry Folios*, *Little Reviews Anthology*, *New Roads*, *The New English Weekly*, *Life And Letters*, *Now*, *Gangrel*, *Cambridge Front*, *Outlook*, *Gen*, *The Westminster Magazine*, *New Vision*, *The Bookman*, *Seed*, Nancy Cunard's *Poems For France*, Harry Roskolenko's *Exiles' Anthology*.

## Roger Burford

### NEW POEMS AND DOCUMENTS

#### 1.

Few more than a dozen poems in ten years! It is ten years nearly since in *Poems and Documents* I collected all the verse I had written between 1926 and 1936, because events seemed 'to warn the artist to tidy up while there was still time, make an inventory of work done. It might help to point out the work to do—the same work, or something else.'

Ten years rush by and one picks oneself up, apparently none the worse—and apparently none the better.

I ended up with a defence of the dream—not the dream as an escape but the dream as a reference back. Or forward. I wrote "What passes by my dream must meet my dream." A year elapses and in 1937 I am writing *The Untrusted Dream*, so apparently in those bewildering days for our country the poetic vision (the dream) wasn't getting any further. Then in 1941, with London on fire, my dream was met, and I wrote the lines I have now called *Light and Dark*.

In the meantime three poems between 1937 and 1940 reflect my interest in pacifism. But in these notes I am not concerned with a poet's opinions but with his attitude to the public. In *And now . . .*, *Dream of Reason*, and *Christ's Paradigm*, it was obvious that I had a statement to make and tried to make it logically and clearly.

I'm prepared to state that I've come to some definite views about the writing of poetry at the present time—that is if you agree that normally the poet *can't* write without a public as large as the society he spiritually lives in. I believe that in these days POETRY SHOULD BE WRITTEN WHICH CAN BE CARRIED IN THE HEAD. Its pleasure, its consolation, its support must be available currently during the day or night without much recourse to the bookshelf. It must accompany us to the desert, the office and in the aeroplane. Poetry must be stronger than our resistance to it, and, lying in our memory, force its way forward with a strength greater than our anxiety.

This is what I say now, and this is perhaps what I was feeling towards in such a poem as *And now . . .*, compared with *Audit*. And I may have been fumbling in this direction

in the pre-Chaucerian rhythms of *Dream of Reason*, because it is easy to confuse memorableness with simplicity. But I felt, and feel, that it is highly dangerous—if the aim is to extend the poet's public to the limit of his society—to fall back on archaic national decorations. No doubt the poet no more than the parliament can go much beyond the nation, but our literature did not become European, at least, by clinging to those swaddling bands, however charming. But the idiom of wide communication is still to find—I only suggest it would be helpful if poetry attracted the memory.

Do not disturb my dream  
what passes by my dream I will not tell  
what passes by my dream I recognise  
I am not born yet, I will not be born

What passes by my dream must meet my dream

Do not disturb my dream  
tell me no news  
tell me no stories of life  
when it meets my dream  
the cow will jump over the moon.

(Reprinted from *Poems and Documents* 1936)

#### LIGHT AND DARK

The dance of sulphur feeds the rose,  
the knee-bones rattle in the glass  
from which the exaltation flows  
to buoy the gleaming feet of brass.

The flaming houses burn with love,  
the tunnels have their soft recess,  
and gold is showered from above  
to light the canyons of distress.

Only the twist of double strand  
is strong enough to brace creation :  
my dream is where I see the band  
unwound; in dream's anticipation.

#### THE UNTRUSTED DREAM

The moon is not of this pattern . . .  
So does it go  
Sliding across the vision,  
And the world, my world, hums;  
The moon which I have lost.

What blinded me but my own hands.  
My hands made this hut, these chains.  
While the moon dipped round the earth.

But one night I shall see it again,  
The moon and what other planet,  
Unrecognised in the remote or cold, the untrusted dream.

#### AUDIT

Her body is a tax on what?  
Mr Audit Clerk are your accounts up-to-date?  
Her higher process, Mr Audit Clerk, should it rate  
Or be an as-if-not?  
Her body is a tax on what?

On the integrity of her man?  
On his appreciation  
Of what is and what is not?  
On the howling people,  
On the health, life, beauty of these children  
So early old, children they are not.

The accountants are in  
The clerks on their toes  
Bring out their day-books  
And polish their lies.

Some survey the heroic future of the ranged noughts and  
leading ciphers,  
Stern actuarial dictators;  
Others hurry down formal corridors to posit a complexity.  
Suddenly the high-collared boss smote the board table,  
Miss Millington was quite nervous  
And worried we all were  
And everyone stopped.

GENTLEMEN, what are we talking about?  
Can you tell me what we are doing here?  
Are we on a long journey with camels  
Over the icy tundra?  
Are we slipping the knife into the asparagus bed and finding  
mushrooms?  
I am well aware that at this moment  
Aërial creatures are suffused with tender love.  
Heaven is not at all the figment you imagine.  
Oh, if only you would imagine it for a moment!  
If only you would throw off your usual caution  
To converse with angels!  
But perhaps we are in this office,  
Or are we not?  
Her body is a tax on what?

Gentlemen, it is a tax on all those items,  
I refer to your catalogue.  
But we have a formula for this occasion,  
I have found it in my own case very practicable.  
I made this formula in grief  
Regarding my tedious life  
And the similarity of all my days.

#### AND NOW . . .

The sore news that breaks our hearts  
Has broken first those men  
Whose bare-hand courage raised our hearts  
But did not save those men.

Our need to die when others die  
To hold our hand to them  
Reveals we must do more than die  
To save ourselves and them.

#### THE DREAM OF REASON

How many still dreamed  
In those days of dwindling reason  
With the ratio falling  
Words put into camps?

In how many houses  
Was the dream-book holy,  
Men still having it  
That dreams stood on reason?

Without the meaning  
Their slumber is dreamless,  
Logs lying in featherbeds  
Till they get up to kill.

Beasts have discourse,  
They speak reason;  
But these lolled wordless  
In the void of that night.

Then arose all those dead men  
With their perished heart-strings  
And slaughtered the dreamers,  
Yes, the dead slew the live!

This was wonder,  
Reason stretched her armour  
Summoned her recruitment,  
For each casualty ten.  
This is what we saw  
And shall see again.

#### CHRIST'S PARADIGM

Little Lord Jesus in this woeful time  
What would be your paradigm?  
To you and to your family  
Love is the word I say to thee.

Christ Prophetic in this puzzling time  
What will be the paradigm?  
To you and the community  
Love is the word I say to thee.

Christ Lord Justice in this and every time  
What remains the paradigm?  
To you and all humanity  
Love is the word I say to thee.

Jesus Christ, in Herod's time  
Was that the paradigm?  
To you and to your phantasy  
Death is the word I say to thee.

#### ANDREA

Andrea my adopted daughter  
What is your affected name?  
A Greek man lurks, a Scotsman also  
And half a mis-spelled queen of England.  
What a riddle ready for you  
Born in times when black and white  
Spin about, and all is shabby.

In such times the hero always  
Writes his own name in the scroll,  
Born again with other parents  
Still the real birth is your own one  
When from out your own long thigh  
You step the heroine of life to-morrow  
To choose a name and never die.

#### II.

From midsummer 1943, for two years, I was in Moscow. What a wonderful opportunity to write about England. However I was too busy to write about anything. All the same here are two poems of mixed nostalgia—*Written in Moscow* and *Inhabited Places*. No profound problems of public and communication arise—only practical problems. I did want, for instance, to communicate a precise feeling about England and Russia to my Russian and English friends and consequently *Written in Moscow* was composed synchronously in the Russian and English languages, though I hardly knew enough Russian to order my breakfast. Many willing friends helped me with case-endings, and even more. Some of the lines in Russian sound good to me. I can't print here a translation into Russian of one of my more secretive and mystical poems which a Russian who was not a writer of any sort did for me without fuss and with apparent success—I mention it so that I can remark that the interest in metrical composition is far more widespread in the Soviet

Union than it is here—as widespread as it was among the middle-class here when my mother and father were young—say, the eighteen seventies and eighties.

People who know Russian literature well may be shocked at the selection of poems I chose to translate. They were, I should explain, those which were thrust in front of me by my Soviet friends. I don't suppose it's a typical cross section of what ordinary people call their favourites—it is the kind of selection that might crop up in an evening's desultory conversation. There is *Who Knows?* a popular gramophone ballad, a poem of Simonov's,\* which to be more typical should have been a nostalgic lyric from the front, Gumilev's *Turkey*—Gumilev was a fellow-traveller who was shot in 1921: his work is no longer printed, but individuals remember it for its felicity of style which reminds them of Kipling, whom they admire: a few lines from the subtle Akhmatova, the Acmeist poetess who was able to continue with honour into the new age: and finally one from Lermontov. I have included this although the translation is quite frankly awful because no evening's foraging among the Russian poets would be complete without an example from the classics. My difficulty was that the classical writers mostly wrote at a length formidable to a student who was tied to a dictionary.

The translations are faithful, not new poems. I can't yet see what information they yield on the poet-public theme, but they give me a chance of remarking that, apart from Shakespeare and Byron, Burns and Kipling are the two best known and admired of our poets in the Soviet Union.

\*THE CHRISTMAS TREE. The Soviet Christmas Tree is of course a New Year tree, but my children who attended many of them in Moscow in the winter of 1944–5 didn't notice the difference. Santa Claus was Father Frost, but he had the same useful sack.

## WRITTEN IN MOSCOW

There is no flower like the rose  
There are no children like mine;  
There is no flower like the columbine;  
There is no flower like the iris, the blue iris,  
There is none like the yellow one.

There are no people like the people of the Russian land,  
None like the English.  
Comparison bewilders only.  
And to my eyes there seem  
No rivers like the Russian rivers,  
None like my village stream.

## INHABITED PLACES

There was a party for ski-ing overnight  
But several were asleep in the morning  
And then the snow wasn't right.  
We went out in the local electric train  
To an inhabited place.  
In the market they were selling lemons.  
We sat on a bridge to drink champagne  
With our carried lunch.  
People said 'Why do you sit in the snow  
When there are occupied houses where you can go?'

Amersham is also an inhabited place  
And in England there are parties overnight  
And across the Chilterns  
An afternoon light  
Of lemons, champagne and snow.

## WHO KNOWS ?

From the sunset comes a fellow  
Strolling past my cottage door  
And his eyebrows speak their language  
But he parleys nothing more.  
Who knows, without trying,  
Who it was he was eyeing?

When I went upon an outing  
He would dance and sing quite gay,  
But on parting at the wicket  
Only sigh and turn away.  
Who knows, without trying  
For whom he was sighing?

So I asked 'Why aren't you happy?  
Don't you think that life is fine?'  
'It's my suffering heart,' he answered,  
'I have lost this heart of mine.'  
Who knows without trying  
Just where it was lying?

Then mysteriously two letters  
Were delivered yesterday.  
For his wishes—dots and dashes,  
Can you guess? he seemed to say.  
Who knows without trying  
What he was implying?

Well, I didn't stop to puzzle,  
Don't expect to hear the rest,  
For my heart somehow or other  
Melted softly in my breast.  
Who knows without trying  
For whom it's complying?

*Translated from Isakovski.*

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Animals in velvet  
Rabbits parading,  
Playthings for the children—  
The Christmas Tree's lading.

Far and wide the children  
As the years go on creeping  
Look for the Christmas Tree,  
To the death ever seeking.

Where fire-birds are perching  
And gold bubbles darkling  
On the tree they are searching  
Happiness is sparkling.

But there's no Father Christmas  
From the summit perceiving  
To hand down the presents  
That answer their grieving.

Fall the yellow needles  
To the foot of the tree,  
I am waiting only  
To be handed down thee.

*Translated from Simonov.*

### THE TURKEY

Unquiet, the dawn brings recollection  
Of colours on a dappled sward  
Where deep installed in my affection  
There reigned a haughty turkey lord.

And there in wicked freedom reigning  
In crimson wattles he appears  
So superciliously disdaining  
My insignificant four years.

No caramels or currant cake  
No lemonade or chocolate cream  
Could any consolation make  
Or touch my consciousness of shame.

Again there comes the deep distress  
Of childhood's shame and childhood's grief;  
From you, adored in wickedness,  
A scornful 'no' is answer brief.

But life is shifting, and awhile  
There passes love and pain somehow—  
And I remembering shall smile  
At you, as at that turkey now!

*Translated from Gumilev.*

### "WE THOUGHT WE WERE BEGGARS . . ."

We thought we were beggars, that we nothing had;  
But when one to another loss we came to add  
So each day was a wake,  
We came to make  
Songs of the great charity of God  
And of the riches once we had.

*Translated from Akhmatova.*

### WEARY AND DREARY

How weary and dreary to think that there's no one on earth  
To help in a soul-felt depression.  
Desire, everlasting futile desire—what's it worth?  
With the years, all the best of the years, in progression.

To love? Tell me whom. For a time? It's not worth the  
pains.  
Eternal love isn't our measure.  
Perhaps you will glance at yourself: of the past, what  
remains?  
So little we reckon its sorrow and pleasure.

And passion? No—sooner or later that sweetest disease  
Declines at a word of sweet reason,  
For life, when you coldly reflect, look around where you  
please,  
Is only a very poor jest out of season.

*Translated from Lermontov.*

### III.

Post-war, post my visit to Moscow, one poem only. It is  
too recently written for my comment. Instead I want to  
repeat that poetry, if it is to get out of books, should appeal  
to the memory. My rule would apply even to long narrative  
verse which has, in the past, thrown up passages of this sort.  
These passages, intruding on the memory, evoke the un-  
remembered whole, its tone and atmosphere. This attitude  
to style is something the poet can do in preparation for the  
large public—if you agree that poetry can have a function not  
exhausted by the novel, the film and the song-lyric. I am  
not sure that the existence in the Soviet Union of a broad

poetry-reading public should kid us that the emergence of such a public is inevitable. There was a fairly broad one here too, for Tennyson, Browning and the hymnologists, when at a certain stage of the industrial revolution the luxury of culture was suddenly more widely dispersed and before the American age offered its distractions. Of course the statistical poet cannot be expected to bear the whole brunt, and until he receives say five hundred pounds for a sonnet he is hardly likely to spend all the labour it takes upon the problem of communication—for this is the problem. Poets have nothing to communicate which is not also within people.

### EXCURSIONS

Oh, four sad strange men took me by the hand  
To town's limit, towards the pit :  
And we went in Sunday blue along land  
Where overfed kale blackbirds sit :  
They took me thirldy down fairy glen :  
Brown water reached a fat girl's waist—  
The fourth excursion then ?  
To town centre back I haste.

## Oswell Blakeston and Max Chapman

### THE ARROGANT MAN

For sheer cussed arrogance  
Take the magician who  
Ordered a port  
And  
Forthwith  
Under the very eyes of the barman  
Turned it into a sherry  
And  
Straightaway  
In one draught  
Drank it.

### SPECTATOR

On a darkly troubled sea  
Beneath a slate-dark sky,  
I watched a little ship that sped  
Crew of lighted candles.

Once I saw within a ball  
A world of laundered white,  
And through the snow a woman sped  
Dark with unlit candle.

### ANTI-FREUD

Last night I dreamt the tiger at your throat  
But none shall name a murder in my heart,  
I measured grief to deepen joy  
That you so radiantly shall live today.

### PROBLEM

Detective who found  
A heart by the window,  
Where is the mystery ?  
Call that a clue ?

## CORYBANTIC

Who is my constant companion,  
the running whisper at my heel?  
Who is the one who wakes me  
with Do you sleep? and How do you feel?

He is a song without words  
or music. He is an empty floor.  
Clock astride my ear-drum  
to drip the honey-comb of war.

Who is the one who wakes me  
with Day is finished : sink or swim?  
He is the demonologist  
trying to decide what's wrong with him.

## THE ENEMY

Nothing that Time will not cure, they say,  
But will Time cure Time that way?  
For here I sit till the mystic day  
When I myself will be nothing.

## THIS MACHINE AGE

Cinema at last invades my sacred moments,  
Now your face drifts, isolated, screen projected ;  
Silkful strings sing softly when you bat your eyelids,  
Thoughts are gangsters shod with skis who cross the  
mountains  
To break the law, the mysteries.

## SKIN TIDES

Bring me where the free flesh cleaves  
From the cloth the prurient weaves,  
Cleaves as the kernel from the husk.  
Shed me your mast!

Sea of two setting moons and hulk  
Of the swaying ribs you've sunk,  
I'll swim for your honey like a bee  
Under white sea.

Bring me where the flesh cleaves from the shore  
Where the lip waves withdraw,  
I'll jump from your hempen beach and swim  
With a following skin!

## GOOD NEWS FOR SLOW TRAVELLERS

Once  
while Heaven moved  
as millstone across the Earth  
Rulers held the names of Birds,  
The Dark Bird Master  
and The Green, Carnation Bird Master ;  
Law appointed,  
harmonised,  
while Sages studied shadows  
of Turtles on the moon.

Now most is left undone  
of all that once was done.

Yet from a far province  
a teacher of the Nine Heavens  
writes that at the waning of the moon  
still the brains of fish grow small  
and at the new moon still  
shells of oysters shrink together.

## YOUR NAME

A page came at the morning hour  
a silver tube to slip between  
the soft closed lips,  
to wake his lord with taste  
of honey drops and milk :

And so I wake, my dear with just  
your name upon my lips.

## THE VEINS OF LOVE

Only place your eye  
Behind each separate screen,  
Peer where each separate self  
Takes sight of things unseen.

The misanthrope, the lover,  
Each plots his vanishing point  
Where lives cross one another  
And worlds to his sun are bent.

These are open casements.  
Lean from each sooty sill,  
Like probing branches spreading  
The veins of love will fill.

#### SECURITATI PERPETUÆ

Cupids and garlands tumble on church bones,  
Cracked, lichenized, silted and sinking;  
Alas Immortality bought by Love's saving,  
Behold the funeral hour of the gravestones.

#### MEMO

I have been asked to remember  
young eyes of a sailor  
in France

You gave your lashes  
to your dear friends

I have been asked to remember  
white nights in cafés  
the little cafés

May all your drinks  
come true

I have been asked to remember  
Tomorrow to wonder if ever  
we may no longer

Be cast into prison  
for jail breaking

I have been asked to remember  
one town's death or long division victory  
and I would remember  
my secret compositor  
his news

That any human hand may set  
the headlines of a heart

#### NIGHT FRUIT

One death  
for each known petal;  
five of blood  
and five of metal.

Pick, till day  
lets mutely fall  
a fanwise curtain  
for her pall,

and springly love treads  
round the bend  
to an utter and  
insidious end.

For each known petal  
each known death  
and a moth-measure  
of shrunken breath.

#### GROTTO

#### BLACK OUT

Night was a Prince who carried water in a sieve, sifting rain  
into invisibility, shaking it in sudden splashes on the unseen  
next-door garden between the moments of silence when the  
earth was a round pebble to the Flat Earthists.

The unseen garden, the leaves, the grass, the fern, the tendril,  
the clutch of vegetable hands, these are as forgotten as the  
name they went by in the catalogue of love.

For the man condemned to listen to suburban rain, Night is  
but a black bag carrying the things that fail to heal, and the  
Prince is now a death that would hurt terribly.

## AS THE DAY IS

Let us pretend that waking  
Is not the night's pretence . . .

Let us rest from sleeping  
Wear a brief night of day  
The quick dream fitting  
The shape of our sinews' loving,  
So live while we may.

Let us pretend that waking  
Is not the night's pretence . . .

Let us return the staring  
Of the enormous eye  
Taste the co-enduring  
Of male love and female warring  
So live while we die.

## GROTTTO

This grass for you;  
I have measured it to your thigh.

These little stones for you,  
All over the ground.

This night under trees  
Was made for you.

The shadows that slip like trout  
In the air for your covering.

Ferns under my single shape are sour,  
Ferns were made for you.  
This wind of love,  
This cave of longing for you . . .

## PLEASURE CRUISE

Awful as love's knowledge  
when love is over  
each night of that long voyage  
we four played poker.

Fearful without love  
without the minimus  
of friendship's half-way promise,  
to learn the clockwork of another's  
mind and pulse and stratagem.

Four demons  
about that ship's green table.

## STRING QUARTET

Two men  
two women  
in music conversing,  
speaking  
ultimate truth  
each to each:

Two men  
two women  
instruments packing,  
departing—  
"Such wretched weather,  
isn't it?"

## SPRING

Trams come boozing down the tracks  
Heavy with shag and bowler hats.

Boys come whipping down the dust  
Hankies in a sudden gust.

Pretty lamb and ugly sheep  
Boys and bowlers never meet,

## NOVICE

Lips, ah lips of merry red :  
Halo tonsure for your head.  
Lips to deny the pious taper,  
Little bud in a screw of paper !

Lips that kiss Abbatial rings—  
Icy fruit of seventeen Springs.  
Pretending folds that bind in oath  
And blanche your hidden stems of growth.

Ah, stand there foolish youth, and say  
You do not rue the chanting day !  
Or that you burn no sweeter essence  
Than the sadly swinging incense !

Lips to shape a lover's whispers  
Sigh the honeyed words of Vespers—  
Sighs that sink to muted prayers  
And carnal thoughts on draughty stairs . . .

Ah little bud, from Abbey's arch  
Step back into your body's church !

## SIAMESE CAT

Stray'd from a sleepy tiger-ridden palace  
Bleached by a sun the size of elephants  
You steal the shadow of a Rousseau fern from Paris  
To demonstrate that jungle life has elegance.

## CAT

Drugged cocoon  
hatch me your buried paws !  
Sun  
steals the drool and dust  
of your folded tune.  
Still  
as pillows breathe  
you burst your brown.  
Time is a saucer  
watched  
by the chiselled fur of ears.

## MAN AND BEAST

The old man and  
the Siamese cat  
side by side  
in the garden sun.

Paws, folded under, chest prowed over,  
the aged cat looks  
like a ship's figurehead rippling  
through sun water.

Over, under,  
look where you may,  
the old man-sailor is,  
so obviously is going  
nowhere;  
the waters foreign or sweet,  
finished.

CONTENTMENT  
(*To Mister Mayor*)

Dream of milk that clouds his eyes,  
Cat's chin drips  
At edge of chair, upholstered fur,  
Fire flame tips  
Paws as warm as red hot pies;  
Mounou, a reason or two to purr?

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

In my heart there lives a cat,  
There also lives a mouse;  
Dears, perhaps you all can guess  
The peace within my house.

GIPSY

My food is in the roots  
Of ferns, of hair, of you;  
My food is found where most  
Eat the penultimate fear;  
The immortelles that die on your breast  
Are sign of the trust  
That you and I will be fed—  
Skeletons of maiden hair.

SUN IN THE SOUTH

A funeral procession does not stop at the grave  
But winding back through years collects  
The things we have remembered of the dead  
Until the coffin carries full corpse cargo:  
The shadow of a gnat he saw with Helen  
When they harassed hands in station room  
Behind the milk cans and the cloak  
Of street he swung from drunken shoulders that  
Swaying night with Paul. Ah, anchor of reality!  
That common object of the countryside,  
The gibbet. Friends, drag my legs to terminate  
My sufferings on this scaffold.

IN SECRET

Honey bird lures on the hunters and  
Tricks them to tree of a snake,  
So that the bees busy may build wax  
Chapel for bow of the God:  
Bow stringed with taut line of bees  
For that His arrow may sting less  
Sweet.

SLIGHT TORSO

See how the flesh is blown  
Like silent morning snow across the crevices of bone.

Then see below the gull-wing bone  
Shoulder to shoulder flown  
A boy's landscape.

His belly is a gently drifted dune  
Which, under some passing moon,  
A spirit dented  
With a single footprint printed,  
That no wind has deleted.

Or see it as a manuscript under-scored  
Pure gold or gold that tarnish mellows,  
Haloes.

FAIR ENOUGH

Because you have repulsed the god at his appearances  
I will not fold my wings round you  
and I am Death.  
I will pluck you out with my teeth  
and spit you into darkness;  
You shall not know my wings,  
You shall not know my arms,  
because you have repulsed the god.

CENTRAL HEAT  
or  
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARTS

All night poor Nero played  
And Rome a furnace;  
No other way to keep  
His dying heart warm.

CEROT THURST

STILL LIFE

Venerable as in a dream  
I count the pleasures of my life;  
Vulnerable as if awake  
I find the treasures of my death;  
Plum veined pips of vintage love,  
The cloud of solitude, the dove.

COUNTRY SHOT

The backdoor slopes into the sea,  
No Hawkers, No Circulars, No Mermaids;  
The Cottage of Cloud and plates unwashed  
While sheep-dog, grey chrysanthemum,  
Bites through his chain till teeth are worn  
And bones laid bare,  
And the woman plays the gramophone  
Which magics the slut to remember when  
The boy said, "Dear  
To embrace you is to hold  
All Summer in my arms."  
The gramophone whirls in the Cottage of Cloud,  
In the Cottage of Cloud and the plates unwashed.

COUNTRY AT SPRING

Thrush nests in a gas mask,  
the black holes of her visor  
are eggs she'll lay for sightless men—  
the brood she'll hatch—  
and tiny feet aside to push their tents  
of grass with fear the moving blade's betrayal,  
small prudent whiskers must confront  
a hawthorn barricade :  
there to drop  
the smallest tears of blood.

In the green arm pit twist curls of oak  
propose an ambush :  
trout to spawn  
improve the gurgling sweat with mines :  
small wonder  
under grazing horns  
there is no stare of milk  
only the time set scare-curds.

CIGARETTE

This is as far as the band comes  
From this point drummers bear stretchers  
("In two hours we move up the line")  
Each man alone with his head cupped  
Between hands wrench'd from their discipline  
Each man before the eternal  
Sitting alone with his head bent  
Rain falls across silence while mud  
Emptily sucks at the landscape  
This is as far as the band comes

LAST DAY

The world a photographic negative,  
The last breath frosts the trembling narrative. . .

## CONTRAST

It is so silent  
where the fountain is noisy;  
It is so silent  
in the courtyard  
through which men tramp,  
It is so remote  
on benches  
near the fountain  
where many jostle and stare,  
There is more tumult in the deserted house  
when I lie silent  
in the arms of a casual lover.

## LITTLE SAGA

"As high as a house  
gales piled it up  
on the beaches;  
Four horses it took  
to draw each cart  
of weed  
from the sea;  
Ah, we shovelled under Earth  
high Air of tempest,  
deep juice of Waters,  
and Fire too  
from the beasts who drew  
the brine heavy cargo—  
their fiery breath;  
Yes, as tall as a house  
mounds quivering  
on land awaiting new history,  
moving as if alive, teeming  
with black plated insects."

## WINTER SOWING

Empty valley, one  
Intricate flower,  
One bloom escaped  
From some forgotten garden.  
Escape?

Last night  
In the dark wind I felt  
Against my cheek the seeds  
Of Lads' Love, Lady's Bedstraw.

## THUMBNAIL

Night is a sharpened pencil shading in  
The planes and deep recesses of its sky,  
A hand that will presently scratch in  
A cold whistle of stars.

Busy the morning that erases !  
A loaded brush to flood its page  
With the warm song of near  
And coloured clouds.

## TRYST

The plantain was a girl who waited  
For her absent friend,  
Dear God, He changed her so that she  
Grows by every road;  
Kind God, for surely now this weed-girl  
She must find her lover?

## HOW IT GOT THERE

Something awful in the garden  
(Adam's garden, God's footfall)  
Made the early Wall Flower scramble  
To the top of Eden's wall.

## AS THE HEART IS

Here in this grave of forgetting  
We have buried the hour,  
Forgetting the grave  
Shutting the door.

Forgetting the door has opened  
To a draught of stars,  
We under our shroud  
They in theirs.

Forgetting there is a moment  
When we remember  
Worlds within worlds,  
Member in member.

## ON SUNDAY

She put on her new mackintosh  
To go down to the quay  
To drown herself that afternoon  
In the rain-whipped sea.

## CHANGE OF HEART

Unless ye cease to be  
As little children  
Unless ye cease to be innocent  
Of a sense of guilt  
Unless ye cease to pull  
The cat's tail of Righteous Wrath,  
Verily ye shall not enter the manhood of love,  
War without end, Amen.

## COLOUR NOTE

My blue  
bird has a black  
eye.

## POEM

They tread the grape with tom-tom eyes  
Under the rising of my hill—  
They, the fell passengers of centuries,  
Are still  
Unmuted in the maze  
Of predatory whos and whys,  
Still laugh the boycott of their days.

Under the falling of my pulse  
I fumble with their slings and bows.  
Buds in the autumn are my valse  
To close  
The gala and the feast,  
To propagate the proud or else  
Bequeath the vineyard to the beast.

## THE GLOVE OF SKIN

She saw my shade,  
She dived again  
Into the quiet sea,  
And grey cloud blood came staining up  
On the water's skin.

My dear, my dear, don't bleed to death,  
Come back, come back to the seaweed strand,  
I'll leave your glove, the glove you dropped  
Between the sea and land.

## CRI DE COEUR

Oh  
work  
should be a rest from rest!  
Not rest  
a rest  
from work!

## PROGRESS

Children of  
Light;  
Afraid of the  
Dark.

## CONFESSORIAL

Ah, as in God is my belief in you  
Your foot's anger shaking my stair.

So. Must you linger, then,  
In heavenly mansions? Come, my creed,  
Between these sheets  
I will crush the holy ghost of you . . .

## INNOCENCE

Grains of mice, scarcely a hint,  
Play in bed of fine Catmint,  
Baby shrews, learning no lesson  
For the Tiger Lilies' season.

## Peter Chilvers

TAKE NO LOVE  
He came to me  
As a shadow falls over summer,  
And his fire burnt in me,  
As snow hisses in the ears of dogs, naked  
To the wind of the meadow.

Such a one was he  
With all the violence of a tideless sea,  
Such a storm that over the guileless rocks  
Breeds the wildest storms in me.

Kisses are common things,  
The priests of privacy before the fall,  
Our groping love is vulgar, like  
A tampering finger in water-flowers,  
And our eyes are too gentle.

O how he fell and worshipped with his long silences,  
Coming from the north through the darkest lanes,  
From the forests where his trees were, broken  
By many knives and the myths of his love.

His lips did not touch mine,  
But whispered only,  
As trees brush warmer than the sun in the autumn air.

Now that the sweetness, taken, hides as a  
Stranger from all eyes but his,  
Now I know  
That the wind, the sunshine of his wandering, blows  
Over him somewhere,  
Reaching the ruffled lanes as he would have wished,  
I do not dream of passion, or  
Dread the flowers he loved, that grow  
So strongly now in every field.

Memories have walked without desire,  
None of my tears would hide the pain,  
Now that his shadow over summer is larger than my fear,  
I do not dare to hope that he'll come back again.

## EVENING DEVOTIONS

No night closes without the sun's death melting the moon,  
And the evening collapses over us like a mountainous cloud,  
A night that burrows to the heart of dusk, to the caverns  
where our souls

Ask impossible blessings and receive less with holy heads  
bowed.

Out across the belly of the sky move the stars,  
The souls of us all, and sheeps' bells chafe our heels  
And the chains of the love in us rattle against the smallest  
hills,  
And are red with the blood of us, with the virtuous  
wandering of our lusts in the fields.

Thus we and our blasphemous tears ride that high road,  
And take with us desires of the dust and the shape of our  
crumbling selves,  
And the lamps of our lovers guide us to our glad graves,  
To the forests of the meek and the poor and the holy and  
those much afraid.

Night closes on our hearts and the withering moon waylays  
our wistful hopes,  
And down to the river go our dreams and the shadows of  
our souls,  
To that breach in our terror through which we see from  
the dust  
A waterfall and a vision of our lust and a compelled cross.

## TO A GREAT FRIEND

So I have spoken of you, and not  
Seen you but the image, the blur, of you,  
The pain and the infinite, the scourge and the satiety,  
The chastity of your heart,  
And the gutters of its pleasure.

And I would not be less ready, as now  
Some think of you less pleasantly, less definitely,  
As some think more passionately and wildly,  
As some think endlessly to have you all,  
As some do and have and are all.

I have seen, from the casualness of my shade,  
The part that did not possess them, nor them that,  
Of the hope they never had, which you had not,  
Which you, secretly, made public to them,  
The stole of the cloak encircling you.

As I have seen, few things have so utter narrowness,  
Few things that are so generous,  
You are not these, not hers, you are not his, nor mine,  
You are not you on your knees, nor clasped, nor kissed.

Such things sleep by the water,  
And are nourished by less than the fire of themselves,  
And are gone within the month to another nature.

You are not what you are, nor as they, nor as her,  
Where the soul is a lie you are fire,  
You are your own treasure expended, and they  
Enjoy the splendour.

## LOVE SONG

Kiss me that I may be kissed again,  
And listen to your heart and hear your voice,  
Weave the magic that will hide my pain  
By whispers in my ear, whilst you rejoice  
My love, that kisses can obtain  
More laughter than the soul provides,  
And sleep that only deepest dawn divides.

I will love you as you ask,  
And be your hour, your running life,  
Give me your kisses on my mouth  
And I'll not wish to be your wife.

Only see one hour does not run out  
With rumours that the night cannot defend,  
Or pass with kisses to harsh words' poor end,  
Where lips speak lies that love has turned about.

Kiss me that I may be yours always,  
Although the jealous months would yet deprive,  
I'll be the maiden of your watchful days,  
All yours and with your kisses all alive.

## DECEMBER POEM

Please do not say you have no love for me,  
And use not caution if you have a care,  
Life here is harder than the love I leave you there.

Draw no blind across the narrow skies,  
For thus our skies are not the sun grown higher,  
Least have a bench for my one prayer,  
Lest any pain we cannot share together.

Please do not say you were not there,  
Or are not here,  
The eyes that cry  
When death is nearer than the narrow sky,  
May yet be yours  
And mine  
Just the far-off beckon of a star when the night is fine.

O love, come clearer than the cloudy moon,  
Be mine, though you say not, for the dawn breaks soon,  
And snow on earth that hides no peace  
Will freeze our love to the nodding trees,  
Or give to a star  
That warmth you gave me beside the fire.

## EPITAPH

That was nothing, the way he looked and said the things he  
said,  
Or held my hands and stroked my head,  
They were nothing, all the things he promised, the things  
I did,  
Abandoning myself to mute inquiry, to my love.

To all that came I gave, to all he asked I gave,  
Spring had blossoms, leaves held autumn in the wind,  
All he wished I wished, all he never had he had,  
All I gave I gave with eyes and hands and love.

All that was nothing, now is less than London in the rain,  
Or starving sparrow fallen from the nest,  
Less than private hate in sober streets,  
Or some man's child that's lost,  
It was nothing how I came to him, how he  
In winter plucked the leaves from boughs and broke the  
tree,  
And burnt the bush and spread my love across its misery.

That was nothing, our strange parting in the dusk, the  
darkening wood,  
All those were blind-flower prints of all the flower was,  
The gifts of love, words wise and wild, those from my  
heart, are dust,  
The paltry dust of dreams misunderstood.

## TWILIGHT

Come again  
Twilight, long gone,  
Come again  
Dusk in warm lane,  
Warm lips, warm heart, warm hand.

Twilight understands  
Hope and fire on hands,  
And bends  
Rivers to your gardens,  
Dusk and shade  
Have made  
Lovers in the dark,  
And sped the lark  
Home to loving in the glade.

Twilight redeems  
Town and street,  
And the grace of feet  
On the strand,  
And the wand  
Of evening thrills the streams.

Come again  
The moon's shine  
The lamps' line  
And the swing of stars  
Up their blue stairs.  
Come again  
Twilight, long gone,  
And dusk's wind  
On the day's rain,  
And night on  
The fool's face again.

### THE RIVER

Have you reached the river yet, my friend,  
Beneath the brow  
Of summer's scorn,  
Beside the corn  
Of April's sowing, the fallow  
Land of unforgetting.

Have you reached the river yet, my friend?  
Above the blow  
Of wind and rain,  
Above the pain  
Of tears and those tears' end  
With the sun setting.

Have you reached the river yet, my friend?  
Behind the rose  
That's weighted by the briar,  
Has yet the liar  
Heart shown what its years intend,  
What new loving.

Have you seen the river yet, my friend?  
Seen the honey and the run  
Of autumn to a wiser man,  
Has summer's plan  
Reached the river where its waters bend  
To all love's giving.

When you reach the river, friend,  
Bend down,  
And in the quivering amber green  
Watch unseen  
Love's birth, as water from the river's end  
Floats down to all the meadow's breathing,  
Where love's a lane  
From the eye's belief to the heart's believing.

### RAIN

Rain soaks the sodden sameness of his  
Face,  
Storming the obedient blood that claims his  
Heart,  
Stirring the stained leaves that lie beneath his  
Head,  
Drowning the stones that mark his last blind  
Rest,  
Dropping through the dripping trees like autumn leaves  
grown  
Old with sun.

It was autumn when he last was home.

He saw when he died no woods or trees swamped with rain,  
Nor any sun that over the green hills cleared  
The fierce air,  
When he looked long night had fallen  
Over pain  
And death was mud that clogged his violent hair.

Say it was brown earth that buried him,  
And squirrels in their gathering season, with  
Beeches full of promise for their drowsy year,  
That found him fondled by the listless rain,  
And keep him there.

Not the tired men that dug a pit beside the  
Damp lane,  
And on a crooked cross scraped his own  
Strange name.

## WHAT IF YOU SHOULD DISCOVER

What if you should discover  
The angels in her arms or uncover  
Beggars in her ways,  
What if the days  
End and the years are toil and the rain  
Enter and your love bring tears again?

What if you should find  
In your heart an old cancer, a blind  
Regret and a drab fear,  
What if you are afraid to hear  
music and laughter in case her eyes  
Remind you of her greatness and your lies.

What if you should unturn  
The damp page, the letter and burn  
Those ready words with your honour,  
You might look upon her  
And discover in your days the worst dream,  
Her love's end and you as you have been.

## MY LADY

She is the casual spirit,  
In whose careless eyes hides the bitterness of meekness dying.

She is the tale and truth of travellers,  
Who have journeyed across plains and passed between  
mountains and talked with the world in strange  
inns.

She is a symbol of fine dust,  
Whose clouds are the products of a waste fertility, who  
sow the tender sides of soft hills with wind-  
needles and shut off the sun from the woods  
above the green villages.

She is the shape and sound of a faint track into the forest,  
Which breaks quickly and quietly through the bush-tangles  
and flows like a shadow through the dark trees  
to the black screens of bank before the great  
river.

She is leaf from a small tree,  
Whose young branches cramp against the barks of great  
timbers, strained by the high walls to small  
heavens, where the tortures fly that are the  
fortunes of the unformed.

She is the blue moon of the lost rivers,  
Who shines upon the grey waters of the sad streams and  
lights with leaf-candles the branches of the lean  
trees and cools the bare toil of the sun upon the  
hollow land.

She is the fruit and freshness of the terrace,  
Blown on by the winds of the quiet forests, tilled by an age  
that has kindled silence in its green bosom and  
grown rich graces from the moisture of the four  
seasons.

She is soft rain upon the mountains,  
Who clouds with mist-orange the slopes of steep hills and  
drips damply through the leaves of tall trees and  
stirs the sulky dust of autumn beneath the swollen  
branches.

She is the whip of dalliance,  
Loitering in the red valley till the sun sets and the breezes  
rise that are the flush of evening and the stars  
hover that are the larks of twilight.

She is the goddess of springs,  
In her gardens the wildest flowers colour the walls that are  
the pillars of heaven,  
Where the grasses fall from beside the clear water the deep  
forest breathes with the fast pulse of summer  
and leaves from the spring-bushes vow autumn  
mating when the next gale blows.

She is the spirit of the silent forests,  
Travellers will know her for she is in these things,  
The sad shadow of the glade is her sorrow and the gay  
rustle of the leaves is her careless laughter,  
We do not know of her bitterness for this she has hidden  
in the trail of the summer wind,  
For she knows that we favour this, sleeping in its path when  
the sun is high and the snow gone from the  
tops of the mountains.

### SIMON, CALLED PETER

As rain falls so the shattered flags shall fall,  
And the shutters of the heart break,  
Rank on rank of tended palm trees waste,  
And Israel, lost in sand, shall not arise  
To claim the honey in its promised land.

So I, disciple, have been promised more than this,  
And nourished more hope than all the world,  
And she held it, holds it now, in the palm of her hand.

I have seen all that time can do, has done,  
I have watched the shadows setting in her eyes, and  
Lived for years in a hovel beneath the mountains of her sun,  
I have crept alone through amazing mists to the temple of  
her grace,  
And finding there one altar, one young cross, carved  
My name on it,  
And shuffled back to my proper place.

As rain falls and breaks the roses, blows the acrid lilies  
down,  
I have more time to lose than fire to use for baking,  
Time that hangs on my hands as the crucifix below her face,  
Time to watch the burning seas, broken and defeated at the  
Heart of the shiftless sand,  
Time to toss my rosary aside, the ash of an unlit fire,  
To walk alone as a legend chooses along the beach of love.

Faithfully, as Simon should, I have kept the altar,  
And come across the place of each heart,  
Each heart that ever loved another,

And I have found there one altar as before, one cross of  
grace,  
And one image on the psalter, one loved face,  
I discovered only the brokenhearted go unheeded,  
And those whose wisdom makes friend of every man.

I have carved on each heart my own name,  
I have watched in Time for my own sign, for the flame  
Of my own love.  
As rain fell I saw her sun dying, killed by the clouds,  
And I wandered away as I have always done,  
To see the world claim its own,  
And, in the rain, to watch for the sun again.

### THE ENIGMA

Some will love her and the enigma,  
And the sorrowful demeanour of her better nature,  
Some will apprise a more gallant storm within her,  
More chivalrous than I confront,  
And will be a source of pleasure.

I shall live as long as my love lives, it is hers,  
For I can make much of this weather,  
The downpour of the unready spirit in her.

Live long and tell her, spirit, of the never begotten touch of  
her,  
The conceived host of awkward chastities,  
Smile at the leisure of her ways, the sloth of her heart,  
And pity the youth of her torment,  
And provide a soft pleasantry as her answer.

It must come, the gay surrender and the broken denial,  
The eve of shame, the night of the heart's fasting,  
Within her are harboured in delight  
The vague stir of things that have not been stirred,  
The vessels laden that have not departed,  
The dreams undreamt that have yet to be ventured.

She will have in those days of her heart  
Hopes full of some praise,  
And a grace that is born of the fear within,  
Some will love her, as the sun this meadow,  
Or I her shadow,  
And will of their charity ride out the high winds,  
And share the answer with her when the storm is past.

### HER

The unseen eyes appear  
In the distress of a murmur, in  
The caress  
Of wheat in a drowsy ear.

A lover is aware  
Of a tear in the light rain, of  
A fear  
That clouds will gather.

So I have in my mind  
Gardens for the poor blind,  
With their flowers in her hair,  
And summer there a rose all the year.

She seems to arise  
From a deep fever,  
Like a leaf to the bough,  
And my eyes believe her  
As immortal as the stars worn  
Between sunset and dawn.

### SEÑORITA

You have seen  
In lights and lanterns,  
Fulsome meaning in harmless things,  
Seen rich and poor  
End their days  
In the manner of ungracious underlings.

You have seen  
In lights and lanterns,  
Snow that capped the scent on lilac boughs,  
And honey in the dull dawn rise  
And dust that showed  
The shape of winter paths.

You have loved  
And learnt its ways,  
And felt the breathless spring and passed  
All summer in a lover's daze,  
And seen young laughter in the trees  
Undone by pain  
Slipping through the gilded leaves like rain.

You have seen  
In lights and lanterns,  
Man and ancient history remade,  
And borne a man, been mad  
For sanctuary in his one pair of arms,  
You have seen

The dim lights in the evil shade  
Brought down,  
And summer all ablaze with dreams,  
And death within the glade.

### HILL AND VALE

Out of it all has come the myth of his laughter,  
And the shape of the jury to be formed against us.

There is now no-one left, no-one sworn to follow  
Under the hum-drum skies of the town, the  
Ways of his quiet saints buried in the fields,  
No-one is left to recover from the walls of his tomb  
The lamp lit and lost and the laughter  
That echoed all round.

Out of it all came the making of fellows bolder than I,  
And some who died in humour and blessed all the long day,  
And some who lived in the shadow of a vanished sun,  
Who ascended slowly with the turn of the year,  
Who were burnt and swallowed by the crowd.

Their laughter is not heard now,  
The berry is the bush of the shrinking spring  
And the bird along the stream the rare thing.

Their laughter has gone out of our wondering,  
Such as we, who follow after, men for the light.  
Dream dreams shyer than the truth  
And live carefully through the trials of His death.

### PSALM

All things are destroyed and pressed to oblivion,  
All things and thoughts and half whispers,  
Bursting speeches and trembling admittances,  
And the speaker is destroyed  
Either by the ill-wind or in the garrulous rain,  
A creature drowning alone in the rain.

And places and the marks upon the places are destroyed,  
Being made by those destroyed,  
And those, uncertain of existence, who registered their protest.

So shall the rivers dry that have no source for the summer,  
The trees that have no roots to feel the damp earth,  
And so shall wither  
All hands that have no hands to reach for beauty,  
To seize some avenue to beauty,  
They shall perish in the hot weather with the thirst of living.

We, those who watch all things rise and crumble,  
And live searching, not knowing for whom or what we search,  
We shall perish, you and I, in this mild weather,  
In the spring or partial summer,  
As lightning follows thunder, however weak the thunder,  
however  
Soft the rain.

All things and thoughts rise to the surface,  
Sometimes composing much of the surface,  
A look that tokens nothing but two eyes looking,  
Or a word spoken

Least meaning those words unspoken that might be spoken,  
For Time, of all things, is demolished by those uncertain of Time.

Living that tomorrow may be only today  
And life a boy's dream of immortality.

### LEGEND IN SAND

Survey the not too critical tombs,  
Which endless labour built for royal remains,  
Where linger Cleopatra's eyes and Caesar's whims,  
Where in the desert's sighs  
Swing the camel's backs and thirsty palms,  
Watched by faded eyes from the solemn Nile.

Grace they have, as evil as the lace of filthy robes,  
In idle death the punctured Pharoahs rocked, caressed  
By tideless shallows in the sand,  
Till death was opened and the sun let in,  
And dainty screams through centuries ignored,  
Till jesting pirates climbed the cunning rooms  
To snatch the fleshless garments from their kings,  
To fill their bags with stones from royal shelves  
And hasten legend to an unkempt doom.

Survey the face that loving leisure so prescribed,  
Or love demanded from protesting faith,  
Sphinx, ancient as our lust, faced to dawn,  
Precious to the fatuous dream, or so conceived  
That love should be defined in one loose grin that Time has banished,  
And steel sand sharpened to a sigh.  
Survey the careful works of present men,  
Charmed by the crumbling face of famous walls,  
Where now they plan to keep their Pharoahs,  
To preserve a monument  
That here a shameless beauty blinded Roman sight  
And held an eager heart awhile,  
For men have mentioned Caesar with her name,  
Whilst none have drawn her out to face the dreams of time,  
Which daub chaste virtues on her common charms.

Survey these breaths of madness, laugh at this screen  
Of pyramids against the sky,  
Man has no recompense for smiles,  
The whispers of the kings and thieves  
That passed their own quick moments in this shade,  
Gather to shiver at the turning down of the sun,  
To chill at the thought of days dealt by their wisdom,  
Days harassed by their hands,  
Days with men chained to incredible stones,  
And bullocks bleeding on the shifting slopes,  
Days of fools maddened by love, of thrones laid on  
Magic steps, cleansed by a commoner's blood,  
Days when the river washed to the foot of these graves,  
And heard their whispers and saw their blood  
Respectfully staining the careless sand.

Survey this not undreamt of scene,  
Eye to magic eye,  
Difference there is none  
Between Pharaoh and made man,  
Cleopatra's eyes are not her own,  
But sand and sun  
Are as one.

#### NOTES FOR A PAUPER

##### *(For Mother)*

Shall I unlock the hours that heal her fate,  
Or stammer out the words that hold my heart,  
Shall I like this remember that soft face  
Or eyes that met that softness strangely most,  
Softer than snow,  
Though then I did not think like this.

Should I the least have noticed all the grace,  
Which now when one twelve-month is past  
Flutters like a fine bird over the bare trees,  
Brighter than blue finch,  
Though then I saw no grace I could have seen.

Death may have its pinions in the blundering ghost,  
But love like hers had leaves that lift our hope,  
Scattering the old tears in the ancient dust,  
As words warm in a wild breeze  
Whisper the wise words of death to us.

Like any eagle blessed with wings,  
Not one poor sparrow lighter than the air, she rose,  
Like any star sighting the maid moon,  
Though then the pain was weaker than the old wound,  
And the night as grey as fiddles in a cold room.

Should I have known, though early morning,  
That the silence fell  
As stolen silver gleams on falling snow,  
That not like a scream through the harsh fog howled  
Her love, her spring,  
But quietly through the calm mist ran,  
Gathering her soft symbols from the ablest storm.

Should I the weakest have foreseen  
Out of some beginning this end just as it could have been,  
As slight as a nightmare in the morning might have seemed,  
Should I have known  
That like a rose,  
She lingers in the garden till the worst wind blows.

Should I not weep that any deed was done,  
Startling the black sheep that never sleeps at home,  
That no death stunned the joy that should have come,  
Foolish as a son I felt no fear when left alone.

Should I alone not force the end that frees her love,  
Prattling a prayer or make a pass at death,  
Or could my life my pauper's love best use,  
To help me trudge to her by any road I choose.

#### END

It shall be the end of intolerable longing,  
The body towards land, towards the shore,  
It shall be the end of loving, the end of living,  
Between brother and sister there will be no memory,

It shall be the end of dreaming, the eyes open,  
The heart uncertain.

It shall be the end of authority,  
A fear removed of monuments,  
Of those fiercest in the land of flames,  
Forests on the deep sea's edge shall burn  
And burst their bodies into air,  
Spirit into light and light into everlasting fire.

It shall be the end of fear,  
Of lives beyond one compass, outside hope,  
The end of faith,  
The end of prayers, of altars framed in wistful peace,  
The end of kisses after dark,  
And hands held tightly in the park.

It shall be the end of slothful spires,  
And dreaming towers in quaking fields,  
For on the shoulders of the wind shall run  
Steeple and chancel and boastful cross,  
All that love dreamed and saw begun,  
All that dreams dared and left undone,  
All that peace blamed but did not bless,  
All that hope saw but saw no less,  
These shall blow on the holy wind,  
And shatter the fringe of the river's trees,  
And sweep the meadows till the earth is sand,  
And the end shall be  
With the setting sun  
Earth lost to man, man lost to heaven.

#### PASS DOWN LOW NOW, SUN

Pass down low now, sun,  
Beneath the pinnacles of the day's fame,  
And remember her name  
Show her as one  
Fiery as the dawn.

Pass down low now, sun,  
Below the soft sea,  
To laughter give a voice of radiancy,  
And to me  
Give warmth and to each lonely one.

Pass down low now, sun,  
Bequeath the red sails a full net,  
And to me all my memories  
Caught by your death, as yet  
Shadows in the clear skies.

Pass down low now, sun,  
Be all I see, at death,  
The water, the way she cried,  
Be her name  
When I remember the dead flame  
And the way it died.

#### VISION

seen by me and bemoaned

stories that cannot be told

misheard, abhorred but yet borne

seen by me and bemoaned

stories that cannot be told

misheard, abhorred but yet borne

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SECULAR HYMN

Thou, in final groves abiding,  
With your words our way be guiding  
Through this darkness—stars of words  
Light the path the earth affords.

Leaves of summers bound in gold  
Line our walls till we are old;  
Bards triumphant! Care bestow  
On those militant below.

Fulfilled, glorious, gone before,  
Thronging on the cloudy floor:  
Milton, Marvell, Blake, and Donne  
Bless the bed that we lie on.

FIFTH DIMENSION

Sound has more cadence  
than fugue and arietta,  
than symphony and serenade proclaim.

Sight tempts the eyes  
to stranger sense than seeing,  
where contour, silhouette, periphery  
form zodiacs of visionary beasts  
who shame mortality . . .

Listen, look out,  
lean down across the world!  
Yesterday and tomorrow are twin thieves!

In the blood is a brittle wisdom  
which snatches plumes  
from the tail feathers of the infinite.

REMEMBER STANDING AT THE EDGE  
OF LIFE . . .

Remember standing at the edge of life,  
Which was a field, a toyshop, or a town,  
Filled with enormous animals and constellations of flowers,

Bricks and balls and mysterious boxes,  
Great red 'buses roaring up and down;  
Where every stranger was a friendly giant,  
And toothache or a bruised knee the only existing pain;  
Remember, remember what you'll never know again.

Now there are many superior pleasures  
And complex variations of pain,  
The toys are dusty in the attic, and the fields  
And towns, and the soldiers' scarlet coats are not the same;

Yet you cannot fail to remember  
That childhood, everlasting in amber  
—Beneath your daily gestures and visages  
It whispers sometimes the needed answers  
In its happy language.

AFTERNOON SCHOOL

Far far from here  
These eyes  
Reflecting still  
Their images of endless fields and skies:  
Were I to shout  
They'd flash like birds from shot  
With quick fear of a different world

This room begins the gloom  
The entrance to the tunnel through their doom:  
Learn here to shape the limbs  
Over the future like a desk, to stoop  
Under a low roof

A word would throw you back  
Through banging doors to your huge air  
To talk of bikes, ice-hockey, and the stars,  
Your frank world without care,  
Where war's a hard word  
Chewed by sad parents at each evening meal

Commands like winter strike, and when they've fallen  
Gloomy as winter birds you droop  
Dully as birds in snow you drop  
By the cold expanse of sheet, the day's trial,  
You stare at paper,  
Weary journey across the white  
Your world shut out under the white  
Which hides your grass and high branches

I can finger the word of release  
Like the key to a cage,  
But I remember a bird's eye  
Watching me from a hedge,  
Brighter than the berries,  
And I could only watch,  
Not reach inside the tension  
Or they would fly, both bird and cage

Your eyes like birds in cages seem to peep  
And flutter to be out  
To light on leaves  
Your eyes watch birds  
They wheel around the branches  
Then rest in leaves,  
No rustle under the cool lids  
Which smoothen light with peace  
Like leaves

Now if I kept a crowd of swallows here  
To talk and preach at six hours of the day  
Who would not for a madman lock me away?

O throw the wings from windows to their plunge  
and play!

### DREAM I.

Floating in night, golden thighs in a green garden,  
Black hair against my cheek, the scent of sleep  
Under a sky of leaves and folded birds—  
Turn together, oh pardon, please pardon  
The thorned rose and the plucked words!

Do you know his name who watches over the wall  
From his white saddle studded with old tears?  
His horse is violent and rides him for a fall  
Down by the broken tramway, where the barred cathedral  
Leers like a sacked schoolmaster at pretty boys.

He has dropped a book behind you . . . Do not fear . . .  
No, let me open it! Call him back!  
But the hooves are thundering the houses down,  
Rousing the carrion birds from their gorged sleeping:  
Ah, we cannot see the page; we cannot read for weeping.

### DRESS REHEARSAL, SPAIN, 1937

Tattered banners swing in the churches,  
tombs are neat with ribbon and wreath.  
Stone memorials cover the ruin of the corpses beneath.  
Why is song dead?

Hungry heroes sing in the gutters,  
Prisons gulp the valiant in years.  
Ardour and urgency melt in a feverish welter of tears.  
Where has hope gone?

Cut the thread!  
Clean the stones!  
Gather up the splintered bones!

Europe must in order be  
for the final misery.

### ALMS FOR OBLIVION

Toast then the dead, our kinsman and our peers,  
who cross the sombre stream that lies ahead!

Alms for our friends and maybe for ourselves !  
Abstraction curls fern-fronds across our fate.

Where ends security ? Who dies to-night ?  
Is it too late to pray ?

A toast, I say towards oblivion.

The tortured and the slain, the drowned and damned,  
those who died quickly, those who lost their lives  
in a slow agony, an ugly pain.

Bruised, burned, and mangled ; shredded bone from bone,  
dead, and again dead ; bunched into Lethe  
like sheep beneath an axe,  
counted in nightmare sleep towards a sum of vindication.

Brief silence holds us, and the grief of years  
whirls over centuries its faint, fastidious foliage.  
Yet they know neither heartache nor fermenting tears.

Yet they have lost desire.  
The hot ash and smouldering fire of love  
has grown cold.

Alms for oblivion . . . ?

Today we rob the dead, and lay out corpses neatly in array,  
tier upon tier of gruesome carcasses, in foul decay most ripe.

Prise then the gun out of his frozen hands ;  
his fight is done, and if snow falls tonight  
he'll gain a shift, a winding sheet, a grave.

But we in strife so insecure, so menaced,  
seek frantically to save our fortitude.

A toast to life !  
Say, 'Alms against oblivion.'

We cannot comprehend finality  
and fear extinction that makes naught of pride ;  
that opens the wide gates of ruthlessness  
to greet mortality.

### THEY PLUCKED THE APPLE IN THE EARLY GARDEN . . .

They plucked the apple in the early garden,  
A seed fell from the core and grew a globe,  
The first prize ticketed wonder of the universe,  
And little they really thought to pray for pardon  
As each year added glory to the growth,  
Prophets and such were banished with a curse  
To grumble in the wilderness, or worse ;  
And still all marvelled at the wondrous size . . .

The gardeners gathered in the yearly prize  
And carefully tabulated all their knowledge,  
Lecturing incessantly in every college  
On gardens and the growth of human glory ;  
Until one autumn evening by decree  
A great parade went marching off to see  
This wonder so renowned in song and story,  
And full of pride to have a world to grapple  
Found a small, wizened, bitter cooking-apple.

### AMBULANCE DRIVER

Cover me now with cobwebs and clemency.  
The clear sky has stolen my sense :—  
horizon after horizon,  
wheat in vast green lakes,  
sun that shakes the scent from lime flowers,  
wind that closes the plain  
to a snarling malison of dust.  
I must forget.  
The freight of the past is too heavy.  
Movement had taken us  
through glare of mid-day heat,  
through thickets of cork trees,  
through lonely villages  
where peasants still beat their corn with flails,  
where tanks clutter the ditches,  
monsters out of tune  
with the moon-eyed oxen  
in the fields St. Francis blest.

From Bari to Benevento  
the mule carts impeded us.  
Clover swooned in placid crimson.  
Over the Apennines went clouds clenched to thunder.  
Under blown bridges  
lay derelict litter of war.  
Again and again we saw  
graves with wooden crosses;  
and the unknown dead, choir to uncertainty,  
caught and troubled our hearts.

Capua, Cassino, Frosinone.  
Now we are taught the agony, the deprivation.  
Only mountains hold tranquillity.  
Old towns are gone.  
We who came blithely from the south have found  
grotesque mounds of stone, where time could claim  
the same churches, barns and inns,  
farmsteads, fair mansions,

Road is to Rome.  
We are not pilgrims but somnambulists.  
St. Peter's dome is set in a pool of quiet,  
but we must pass the cool blond Tiber,  
down the straight convoy route, down the dark way,  
coil, loop and bend, stretching beyond the day  
towards night's mystery.

We drive to where the battle-line is set,  
to get torn men,  
to fetch shell splintered soldiers,  
to drag from hell of pain,  
those who may never love their youth again.

Cover me with a pall of insensibility,  
divest me of feeling.

The freight of the present is too heavy.  
I must forget.

### THUNDERSTORM

The throb of engines in the sky  
has threatened us too long.  
Thunder, that was royal and wide,  
seems menace of gunfire.

Are we safe? Are we safe?  
Is the house down?

### CHRISTMAS EVE

I do not think this night  
the roof will crash to crack my skull.

Long after mid-night, with the ghosts of mind  
I shall hold council,  
tied to throbbing thought,  
shackled by memory, unnerved by time.

War is the hearse we pull through the dark streets,  
plumed with dead-feathered-birds,  
blasted and stark.

War is the coffin and its piteous wreath,  
the clay upon our face, the gnawing worm.

'A child is born . . . . Peace upon earth . . .  
Good-will to men . . . .

In Springtime, with Christ risen,  
the Great Offensive will come.

### DREAM VIII

December with Christmas holidays and trains  
Shakes the toy snowstorm in the globe of memory,  
And the empty child, vessel to hold all pains,  
Starts on his journey towards Gethsemene.

Wise men and rich from East or West who wander,  
Fabulous uncles with presents for all boys,  
O you'll preserve your skins from Herod's anger,  
Departing hurriedly, leaving your toys!

And the childrens' blood who will remember?  
The lovely gifts exploded for years :  
Born in a manger, born in December  
Christmas in Europe is terror and tears.

#### TO NOEL, KILLED IN AN AIR-RAID

I had better have loved a flower  
or a young larch tree.

—Her hair in the sunlight catches gold  
and the curve of her cheek  
is birds' flight suddenly stilled.

Stilled too  
is her eyes' bright fervour,  
and the glint of her hands  
which wavered ever astray.—

No one can say  
that in death she is not beautiful;

yet  
I had better have loved  
a flower or a tree.

#### THE END OF THE END OF THE END

Give me fruit  
frosted on the bough,  
and the scant northern weeds  
that now unfold from sheafs ice-cold  
to kiss the frozen air.

Give me pale rosebay spires  
that mourn on ruined soil,  
and bitter berries scarlet on the briars,  
and blackthorn with its royal blossom gone  
yet flaming still in every jagged spear.

Defeat is like discovery;  
we sail  
in a tossed ship  
near to the tempest's heart,  
to seek Elysium in vacuity  
and find obliteration.

#### THE PATRIOTS

Are you sure you don't like this war,  
are you sure you don't prolong it,  
green, beady-eyed, bulging woman, avid for blood?

Your fingers grasping the page of atrocity stories  
have turned into talons clutching the necks  
of the white thirsty boys who die in the desert.

Ensconced behind barriers of trade and tradition,  
the cotton-wool patriots sob out condolence  
each time they read the casualty lists  
or count out the victims of total warfare.

‘ Shocking,’ they say, ‘ disgraceful, scandalous ! ’  
you used to laugh at them, now blood  
spurting from grievous wounds  
writes question mark to all your promise.

‘ Shocking ’ has it.

#### CALCUTTA I.

Monsoon breeze scatters  
Dust, illnesses, and rags;  
Over Kidderpur Bridge mutters  
The drab edges  
Of the city's central mouth  
Of business, whores, and bars;  
Trams clank between bullocks  
And sacred cows  
At crossroads chew and drowse  
Beside men without food or houses.

The tired, dust-filled eye  
Turned up to the great sky  
Sees only machines of pain flying,  
And back on the pavement finds  
Charts of the stars, spread on rags  
Before the verminous astrologers;  
And over all the carrion birds  
Watching the dying—  
Watching the old  
Who are having their futures foretold.

## CALCUTTA II.

Diamond Harbour—dull with grease  
Choked with coal-dust, and hot skies roar  
And the stinking river  
With machinery of war,  
And the mind closes tight  
Round its private globe of light;  
Oily pools heavy with barges,  
Docks screaming with cranes,  
Dull,  
Dull pain . . .

Ah, but the ships, like lives  
Launched on desire, and my heart  
Starts on that imaginary voyage  
Towards the island of your heart,  
And fishes flicker beneath  
Like swimming wishes  
Hauled back from the brink of the withheld image  
On the cast line of thought;  
And even the absurd ducks and rubbish  
Bobbing on the surface are lent  
Some brightness of the far sea's element.

CALCUTTA III.  
Bow Bazar Street

What is your fancy?  
Do you wish to buy  
A roll of muslin, some opium, or a boy?  
Or a Persian girl packed nicely in a box?  
A monkey? A murder? Any unusual joy?

Do you wish to sell  
A friend? A bowl of goldfish? A match?  
A bundle of old newspapers, or your finger-nails?  
A ton of Turkish tobacco, or a watch?  
Come to me—I'll do anything for money:  
Money, money, sweeter than honey!

## THE WINE OF THE SOUTH

Under the scent of roses  
lies a tawny threat,  
caught in the narrow streets  
as caged sunlight;  
violent behind bars of bright heat  
locked against quietude.

Oh soft white mules  
with velvet eyes,  
who carry the grapes to market.  
Will your foals, born in May,  
go garlanded with myrtle?

In the taverns  
wine is as sharp and cool  
as winter herbs,  
—but the beast is there :—  
caged in hot quartz,  
relaxed supine in pliancy.

I have seen his claws  
draw arabesques in flesh,  
with blood as token of defeat.

## PROPHECY

Peace, when it comes  
will silt the bloody rivers  
with sand of clotted quiddity, with shale of scorn.

Torn threads of feeling  
must go graft themselves on granite rock,  
on snarling cactus trees.

Till reason is a desert and we lead  
a child without anguish  
to divine wells.

## THE WAR WIDOW

What has gone, veracious face,  
from your remembered grief?

Why does despair no longer whirl and spin  
to brittle shape before your eyes?

Why has surprise suddenly caught you up  
and set your mouth, smiling, to kisses?

—Yet no one there . . . . —  
Why this, with no one there?

## VENUS IN SCORPIO

When grief comes dressed as a bride,  
we tie roses with ribbons.

Wide is the world which crashes  
on either side of the crimson carpet.

Brief is the song,  
long is the night

when grief comes dressed in white,  
like a bride.

## KISSING YOU WHEN YOU WERE ASLEEP

It's here I'd choose to die, and my last breath  
You'd draw between your lips, and after death  
You'd bathe my limbs and comb my hair, and weep  
An hour or so, and dry your eyes and sleep;  
Dreaming you'd turn towards me, but in vain;  
And then the dawn would filter through again.

I hope you'd lock the door and cut my heart  
Gently away and stitch up every part,  
Then 'phone the funeral men and tell my friends  
And make them bury me where the Aln bends  
Out from the hills at home . . . But that you'd stay  
And keep my heart from grieving, all that day.

You'd know the kind of jar; I think you'd choose  
A shapelier one than is in common use  
To stand upon your mantle-piece and be  
An everlasting lesson without fee,  
You'd soon be expert—all those poems and letters  
And now the thing itself, what could be better?

Then some day all alone you'd go and stand  
Beside my grave, up in Northumberland,  
And plant some flowers as we said one day,  
Sweet-peas I'd like—and then you'd go away  
And hurry back to Edinburgh by evening  
And close your curtains just as light was leaving.

Perhaps you'd be a heart specialist, with knowledge  
Famous throughout the world, and every college  
Would clamour for your lectures and advice;  
Perhaps one day you'd win the Nobel Prize;  
And then I hope that everywhere you went  
I'd go, to illustrate your argument.

“Tell us about the heart,” the class would say:  
I hope they'd sometimes see you turn away  
And wipe your glasses, maybe; you'd recall  
A day in Kensington or at St. Paul's,  
“I love this heart,” you'd murmur, and my jar  
Would seem a vase where all our roses were.

## HARPOON

The huge whale of circumstance  
heaves bloody gills,  
curdling salt water with refulgent gore,  
till more than half the world  
clots and congeals,  
and only dreams can lie  
tranquil,  
tracing icebergs and the backs of seals,  
cresting moon-splintered waves beneath chill sky.

Where is reality?  
Who seeks to-night  
truth and the core of sense and reason's wheel,  
a zodiac of planned mythology,  
a maze whose heart no minotaur can find?

Part of myself has died!  
Have you such scorn to pour upon conceit  
that you can steal bright wit and peace of mind,  
persistence, focus, vigour, flexibility,  
a bit to curb your pride?

The huge whale of circumstance  
heaves bloody gills;  
Why did you plunge your harpoon in the poor brute's eye?  
There is tact even in whale-fishing.

## DRAGON'S TEETH

If I give you my dragon's teeth of feeling  
you may drive them to slavery.  
If I plant them myself,  
they will rise up as armed men.

A host, a furious phalanx  
to make war on you,  
to coerce, mock, destroy.

Do not ever again tell me Love is blind.  
He has the most outrageous insight,

the most cruel reason.  
He knows the breadth and depth of viciousness,  
with all the vices at his finger-tips.

Armed men or slaves?  
Your will or mine?

Anger has thunder-bolts to toss at fools,  
but Sentiment wears hob-nails on his shoes.

If I give you my dragon's teeth of feeling  
you will snare them to slavery.  
If I plant them myself  
they will save me from perfidy.

## A ROOM FOR MONICA

With high white walls whispers write peace upon,  
Stars dusted on a roof of clouds and glass,  
And curtains closed on the pitiful streets of Europe  
Is the fantasy of my hermit's image,  
Only, embraced and worshipped, not resisted:  
There shall be no exorcism by prayer and beads,  
For I see us in that room speaking evening's language,  
And your healing hands open our sides like books, to read  
The history of our hearts, under one low lamp lit;  
And then for rest,  
A pillow with your dark hair over it.

## TIME AWAY

Afterwards, when this is long ago,  
I shall remember serenity,  
in quiet cadence  
lapping against the walls of centuries  
to unleash ghosts.

Now in the present  
hooves of time beat fiercely,  
bruising the heart that cries aloud for comfort.

We, ourselves, frail in actuality,  
are trampled underfoot.

## AT INVERAREY

Bronze is the sky  
and dusk makes purple the air.

Sea-gulls fly  
towards a sun that has set.

Come home into the dark house  
and let the night take care of itself.

## DREAM VII

O where are you going to, climbing those stairs,  
Son of my heart, in a future evening?  
There things go "thump," and nobody dares  
To ascend alone or soon they're grieving.

Listen! The wind in the chimney howling!  
Stay in the firelight, safe and warm;  
Out on the moor the ghosts are growling,  
Curtains are closed and you're safe from harm.

Here in this room, at our heart's centre  
Sit on my knee or sprawl on the floor:  
We two are lucky—no other may enter  
Her evening heart by our secret door.

## THE HOUSEBREAKER

Love has no pride  
but seeps between the dusty floorboards and the cracks of  
walls,  
constant as water, penitent as tears,  
to wash the feet of passionate regret,  
to quench the thirst of pain.

Thousands of shells, then,  
thousands of sea-anemones,  
star-fish, a rain of coral and a shower of sand,  
a wreath of topaz weed, a shoal of fish.

The sea that was my love, that was my tears  
has so much pride that stars are gulped to gloom.  
Whirlpools of water overwhelm the house  
and wash regret away.

## TO THE SPHINX

I am cut down.

Love had sprung up,  
a field of corn,  
and now,

before harvest, before dawn,  
in the darkest hour,  
with sickle and with sharpest scythe,

I am cut down.

## CELESTIAL DECEPTION

Love's candles are put out  
and one by one,  
the acolytes of passion  
pass to sleep.

If you could keep one taper flame alight,  
we should not need to stumble,  
we might go  
where the slow cavalcade of young desires  
journey to bliss.

One kiss upon the eyelids,  
one caress,  
and loveliness flames bright on every tree.

Blinded by ecstasy, we do not see  
Love's candles are put out.

## TO AN OLD LADY

To keep away,  
Away from those who hoard my earlier life,  
Away from the rooms of fear warm with sighs,  
From the period greeting and reminiscence,  
The bent man stopping me in the street, saying,  
"You walk like your father,"  
The old housekeeper saying,  
"You have your mother's eyes."

To keep away,  
Away from the spurious peace that is a needle,  
Away from the invitation to stay for the night,  
From the cracked relationships and the faded photographs,  
She meeting me in the street, saying,  
"It's the first time we've met since that evening at Roughlee,  
You're quite a stranger now."

To pay a visit there  
Would be like climbing to your room,  
You who are still warm,  
You'd switch on charm,  
Thinking you knew why I'd come.

But I'd refuse a chair,  
Wanting only to see you well,  
You whom I love still  
Across your old guile,  
All you try to make me feel.

To pay a visit there,  
Rejecting all offered and shown,  
Curve under hill and river  
Winding dark and slow  
Loved view in high window . . .

And I'd refuse to rest,  
Watching that treacherous, cork-soft hand  
That hides a needle  
To pierce my flesh with peace.

## FAINT WISDOM

We bend the branch and ask too much of sweetness:—  
the bough leaps back and blossom spills around.  
So are we crowned by blossom,  
so are we blinded by falling petals  
while malign twigs lash,  
and stamens splash to earth, luciferous,  
and leaves fall like green rain.

The birth of caution should come after learning,  
and yearning tire when hopes have been in vain.  
Yet Blossom trees are rare, and if again  
we bend the bough and ask too much of sweetness,  
we can but blinded be by golden rain of stamens  
and by cruel twigs lashed.

For blossom scent is ours,  
and fallen flowers, and much, so much of sweetness.

## TO SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

The quiet woman  
caught thoughts with a fishing rod  
and baked them with the bread of comprehension.

You and I make cold, articulate conversation  
but she can feed five thousand.

## AGAINST REALITY, SPEAKS YOUTH

"Older than honour is the mind's unreason.  
In turbulent treason, our dreams swoop down.

Grown out of acorn shells and curved moss roots,  
this fancy shoots to giant dragon flowers.

Hours out of time are carved in mystic stone  
to immortality, unknown, unthought,  
caught in the sombre crown of destiny."

## AND THE SAGE REPLIES:—

Believe, my child, that the themes you love have fidelity.

Would the grass grow even so high  
if it sought not the sun's fertility?

Would rivers flow seawards through mountains?  
Or swallows fly south from the snow?

Go your way and lose grief, destroy cynicism.  
Wonder and joy are still to be heard  
as notes of pure magic.

One grass blade snaps in the beak of a bird  
yet the tramp of the herd  
has not stricken the turf of the hill.

## THE LAW OF MERCY AND MERCY OF THE LAW

### VINDICATION

We suffer because of beauty  
as the wind's breath  
shivers the grasses  
and gives them no rest.

We cry out because of loveliness  
as the wave's weep  
under the ocean's  
rhythmic beat.

We build because of anguish,  
a lithe spire  
mirage to the memory  
of lost desire.

## THE SILVER BIRCHES . . .

The silver birches  
Hesitating between earth and air  
Delicate swirls of smoke  
From flameless fires  
Under the threatening moor.

O beware  
The bursting flame  
The moor's rising

Beware of those whose lives  
By wrongs like flames  
And poverty like stone  
Tempered in woes  
Are beaten into blades  
And wait to strike

Springing like grass  
Through grass in finished roads  
Time wind and seeds  
An army breeds.

## BEDRAGGLED PHOENIX

The palms of hands unkissed have nail wounds.  
Keep pace with recompense and let me go.  
Surely I burn enough to be a phoenix bird,  
a resurrection?  
For if you show compassion, I can rise  
from ash of indifference,  
from frigid languishment,  
into some brighter segment of the skies.

The poignancy of grief has solace  
at the heart's core where silence stays to heal.  
Surely you care enough to build a funeral pyre,  
to bring an offering?  
For if you bear no malice, I can speed  
from abject self-abasement,  
from dreary surrender,  
from graceless violation of my need.

## ADVERSE ASPECTS

Scarecrow, among the vines,  
your clamour cannot keep the birds  
from building in your beard.

Yet could you bleed,  
this whole hillside  
would wither with your anguish!

Scarecrow, who guards the corn.  
I have abandoned grief.

Each leaf is wet with rain;  
each wheat ear glows with tender dew.  
Each poppy head knows how to greet the brief sun and the briefer rainbow.

I must go greet tomorrow now today stands gaunt and heartless, in the sodden field, Scarecrow to all the winds.

### SONNET

The world wins its flashy initial victory, Driving its metal over books and hearts; Alas for the weak whose only church is machinery, Who wonderingly murmur that sombre breviary! Mounting the newest marvel with devout humility! They should quarter the priest and cut off his parts . . . But that duped congregation is nearing the end: Who rides a tiger can never descend.

Alas for the weak, who inherit less Than we had at the start, under our tree; How holy is patience in darkness, we Shall pass by all the finished factories To heal and love and write a world to read In an element of endless leaves and summer.

## THRESHOLD

I am no longer inconsequential for I have found comfort in my own skill and dexterity, my own wisdom.

Wrapped in warmth, I shall not feel cold again; never starve, never die of thirst, never throw myself down.

—Youth went out with the whirlwind to drown himself in a deep pool.—

But I am locked in life and cannot escape.

## WHEN ALL'S POTENTIAL, NOTHING DONE . . .

When all's potential, nothing done, All errors through the senses run, Still pondering in a chair The poise that's born in air.

These limbs were free and learnt to move Through complex dance and easy groove, Unthinking served the turn, Though never taught to learn.

Now all's in doubt, the dubious eye  
Suspects in clearest truth a lie,  
Within the purest light  
A single, perfect night.

Thought's but a jelly and the shell  
That holds it firm the walls of hell,  
There grows within our fear,  
The bitter pearl, the tear.

So dry upon a future shore  
Shall lie the husk of what we were,  
While bright on breast or hand  
The dear disease we planned.

Young men—  
I see you  
never know

#### WHEN ALL'S FORTUNATE, NOTHING DONE

When all's fortunate, nothing done  
All stores are closed in the sun  
Closing the windows, made a man  
Alive for the world, this in front a tomb  
Who sees the world, this in front a tomb  
Mourning, eyes of distress, but now again sees it  
They see no more, who see no more  
But that when the world is out before  
Who comes to the world of life?

#### Mark Holloway

##### THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

What shall it profit you and me  
To learn the sun's candlepower  
Or the speed of light? What are scientists  
But human fools when lightning slays a tree  
And lays it at their yokel feet, O where  
Is the sun's beat in their cold-fingered look?

In frigid observatories astronomers  
Set down the stars and docket every comet  
In a book. This spidery symbol  
On the fly-walked page is Venus  
Caught to earth and laid by a clerk's hand  
On this white sheet, colder than death.

Science has shown me like Mephistopheles  
To Faust, pleasures which turn to dust;  
It has shown me a robot's world.  
Along its railroads of reason I have found  
The lust in the dark, the lost hunger  
And the ineffective visions of the blind.

While magicians hide the secret of beauty  
In a mathematical tag, our hearts  
Like wounded birds, failing and falling  
Drop to a slow death. Let us find  
Our own sun with the naked eye  
And spend life's hour on his golden sands.

Let us give Venus up to eternity  
That we may know those visions in the sky  
As sea knows moon, untutored  
And unquestioning. Let us touch time again  
Through a thousand purgatorial years  
And spin our five senses into the web of stars.

## ALL CLEAR

The dome-cracked, doom-laden night  
Retracts; dawn's blue first light unfires  
The fires of night; ruins reveal their shape;  
Tired as the firemen's eyes, dust-laden walls  
Regard the naked site; raw as their hands  
Are the skinned roofs of a street.  
Day lightly floats to earth, the town respires, birds sing;  
Spires like pencils write across the sky  
History older than bombs can try—  
This is the spring of another twenty-four-hour year.

## TWO LOVERS IN AN UNDERGROUND SHELTER : LONDON 1940

Of this new Pompeii and its living dead  
Holding their tired heads above these sad ashes,  
Of minds fused into a creeping lava, numbed  
And dumb, inviting death like a grisly dancing partner  
To their lives; of these they are not part,  
But lie here in this corner with a new world between them  
And in their eyes.

As the peach is sweetened by the summer sun  
And its clinging flesh binds to its secret stone,  
So she, as her dawdling fingers find his face  
And all its hidden valleys, stares so intent  
Into his eyes, she must read all the heavens there  
And find it strange indeed to be a ring round Saturn  
Circling slowly.

The old world hangs on the cross above  
But here under the battled earth he lies  
Like Christ in the tomb, his heart afire with new life  
And in his eyes the light the first world saw  
The moment of its dawning. The spark of love  
Survives these ashes, and here in this corner  
A new planet swims.

## TO A VISITOR FROM THE TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY

You have sailed into this dead sea incredulous  
Appalled by the mouldering walls  
Of life, the wizened brains, you have shuddered  
At the knife's indrawn edge, but tried  
To end our suicide, amputate dead limbs  
Cauterize our body's rot, clean it white  
As the coming tide.

Under the shroud of living you have crept  
With microscopes for eyes; you have learnt the ways  
Of our present death. You have lain  
With the whole world, holding its ebbing pulse  
And the skein of its taut nerves;  
You have stolen along the chambers of its heart  
And paced its brain.

You are Columbus brought back to Spain  
Shackled by fools with death's dust in their eyes  
And pieces of gold knocking under their ribs;  
You will not be tried, but sold  
In ignorance. While your far-distant land  
Is ravished, they will change your heart  
For ingots of gold.

They will say you told a mad tale  
And tried to live in a Utopian dream,  
Will scorn your ideals but swarm on that land  
Like vermin. I can already hear the excited feet  
And the wild cries of men escaping from men  
Running heedless and headlong  
Past your true heart's beat.

## TO A GIRL IN OCCUPIED FRANCE

I doubt if we could weave to-day  
Along some sunlit lazy street  
The faultless, magically gay  
Choreography which lovers feet  
Instinctively make. Perhaps this power  
Which brought us mystery now may,

At that conspiratorial hour  
Of darkfall when the light of day  
Is drawn beneath the heaven's line,  
When soft and full the pale moonshine  
Creates a dream within a dream,  
Make love, and lovers, shadows seem.

So then, my heart, we'll shadows be  
Until the sun comes up again  
And the world forgets its idiocy  
And I, like that melancholic Dane  
Who found that love sometimes may die  
And, overcome, let poison populate  
Her veins, and stain the crystal of her eye  
Until the whole world spins with hate,  
Will wait for my Ophelia floating down  
The stream of time towards that town  
We knew so well, where lovers soon  
Shall move again beneath the moon.

#### TO A FRIEND IN AMERICA

What is it taught your eyes  
To well up into my veins  
And break out like a flower,  
To hold the whole world still  
And halt that power  
Which strides among the stars?

If I were now mirrored  
In those twin grey pools  
The idiot clown in my head  
Would catch in his intricate net  
My swimming thoughts  
And bring them to the hot sands of my heart,

But because you are far away  
I have outgrown the clown,  
Am one with the still world you hush,  
And your two wells,  
Bell clear, cool my heart  
And the longing there.

#### TO E.B.McC.

My mind-enveloped fingers will not bend  
To the heart's word, nor memory of love  
Bring back the substance of its images.  
O hands could you but touch these mental shapes,  
These unsubstantial pageants of the mind  
Or cross these wintry war-time centuries  
To hold again that splendid minute  
Eternity's long lost earthly visit.

O eyes take on that everlasting night  
In which the blind touch flesh and blood again;  
Becalm the fevered fingers of the mind  
With those soft peaches and alabaster hands,  
Autumnal waterfall of auburn hair;  
Put off the stark demeanour of to-day  
And in this all-revealing loss of sight  
Wake to love's ever returning morning.

#### AN OLD MAN REMEMBERS HIS YOUTH

The thought of love to an old man  
Is the river's rich-pastured source  
Brought to the salt and sandy sea's edge  
Of time. Swiftly the years flow  
Without ebb, and all that the old shall know  
Of youth is perfume of blossoms idly caught  
By moving waters. The same moon's light  
By which I lay in the rich grass  
Now finds these dry and aching sands  
Which lie by the edge of an endless sea.  
That time is gone when my heart leapt  
Or my feet moved to a fiddler's tune  
And my heart is an old ailing swan  
Crossing the winter sky on listless wings  
To deep night-ridden moonlit pools  
Where waterlilies undulate their petal's lips  
And form against the water's side  
The thought of love, the thought of love.

## AN OLD MAN PHILOSOPHISES

An old man in the book-filled room  
Through sunlit passages of love meanders  
This winter night. Though faded  
On the yellowing sheets, the bloom  
Of written love, like pot-pourri,  
Has multiplied its fragrance.

The door is locked, and locked beyond it  
All present cares, all glad moments unfulfilled  
Of past imagining. Locked in his heart,  
And in these time-born words, dreams for a moment live.

Was it I whom that tempestuous Aphrodite  
Passionately loved? These brittle-fingered hands  
Belie the possibility that through a summer's length  
They held her close. Yet it is stranger that they turned  
away  
Towards autumnal marriage, in whose bed  
Care was for the first time conceived?

Sad is the age-old theme, the oft-repeated  
Platitudinous illusion of a young man's dream.  
Should I then unlock the door, let in to-day,  
Throw yesterday upon the fire, and take to-morrow's chance?  
No choice remains. These letters  
Are to-day, to-morrow and yesterday; as my blood thins  
Towards death, so their ink fades; feebly my fingers  
Flutter among memories of their former strength.

## THE CITY SAILOR'S DIRGE

Let us sit down and talk of failures  
Of creatures crawling under burdens  
The sea of sorrow's sailors  
Etching lonely charts of boredom  
Splicing love-knots with the keepers  
Of the watch of whoredom.

Many a pink and golden mist  
Embezzled by the fire of wishes  
Shall mould the carpet-staring guest  
To gobble up dank alley kisses  
And hang his raincoat on a lust  
If his pass-book pleases.

The spring uncoiled for action  
Waits upon the pleasures of a clod  
As flesh and blood and money sates  
Its vengeance on a harsh sea-bed;  
The king of boredom's master mates  
At the tall masthead.

These are the dudgeon-dusted days  
Sad lyrics of the much accosted;  
The city sailor's sunset lies  
Embedded in these breasts of lead;  
These are the days shall steal his eyes  
And darken pleasures bed.

## ON A YOUNG MAN DROWNED IN THE THAMES

Widowed like an autumn willow  
By death's chill breeze shaking green tears  
From her eyes, the young man's lover weeps  
By the river's edge. Into his ear  
She would breathe new life, but like ivory  
He lies, as a swan might, had it fallen there.

River clay lies matted in his hair  
From the plummet dive; wild staring eyes  
From their lead-hued lids beseech the skies  
To banish visions of dead men and bones  
And darkest night among the weeds and stones.

## HEARING OF A SUICIDE

The birds wheel no more  
Nor turn to the south  
Free migrators of the air  
And you in your tight sphere  
Have always in your mouth  
The tang of iron, the clotted gore.

If you held your life in your hand  
Like a mirror reflecting a barren land  
And dashed it in shivers on the ground  
No one should wonder at it  
Or blame you, but credit  
The reckless standard of your merit.

When they took what liberty you had  
You took your life, not proof  
Against the coldness of war  
And the sun lightens no more  
Man's heart, but hangs aloof  
Cold as a critic, and sad.

## SIMPLE SIMON'S SONG

Oh, for the days when birds wore spats  
And babes were begotten on cokernut mats,  
Oh, for the glorious land of the free  
Where women wear nothing above the knee,  
With a hey nonny no and a sickening jerk,  
Why in the hell should anyone work?

Où sont les neiges de yesteryear,  
The dodo, the yak and the stuffed polar bear?  
Gone with the wind and the rain and all that  
And the dust on the band of a mauve bowler hat  
To the third floor back of a boarding house  
With the little old woman who looks like a mouse.

Oh give me, oh give me a fruit machine  
And the girl on the corner shall be my queen;  
But give me, but give me a football pool  
And she shall go dressed in satin and tulle;  
But he who works for a monocled thug  
Is better nor worse than a bloodstained mug.

Why should I work and why should I toil,  
And why should I mickle and muckle and moil,  
And why should I live on the Highgate line  
In order to get to the office by nine;  
And why to the power of the ultimate why  
Should I work at all, or live, or die?

## TRAIN SCENE

Years as the train wheels roll  
Cover the face which care has lined,  
Engraving deeper on that mind  
Channels of fruitless toil.

Toy with your crossword puzzle, manikin,  
For this is a crossword puzzle time  
Of ups and downs that lead nowhere,  
In which the circumspect may move  
Carefully from square to square.

A clue, a word, a cross, a frown,  
Looking obliquely and writing down  
Complex details of a lost love,  
Striving to make the puzzle complete—  
And then, poor manikin, where will you move?

## TO THE THAMES

Wind slowly down the hills  
Licking the roots of willows;  
Wander lazily up backwaters  
Meander in cool meadows.

Empires and emperor's bones  
And the dust of kings  
Lie restless in your depth  
No more to you than stones.

Man stretched his arm  
And down your ragged length  
Built bridges, locks and weirs  
But never tamed your strength.

Ripple upon ripple  
Generation upon generation  
Man is suckled, is torn  
From time's nipple;

His revolutions fail their promise  
And you have seen his to-morrows  
Become yesterdays  
With all their sorrows;

You have seen in his heart  
The violence he has nourished  
For creeds you knew would die  
And you have smiled apart.

Wind slowly down the hills  
Licking the roots of willows;  
Wander lazily up backwaters  
Meander in cool meadows.

#### OLD SALT

When finally land-bound  
He who had wandered in alien seas  
Crossed many harbour bars  
Stepped lightly on many shores,  
Would writhe in an armchair,  
Rise, spin the globe to Cathay seas,  
Point split finger-nails at Wei-hei-wei,  
Shanghai and Singapore, stand  
At the garden's edge as on the bridge,  
Take mental angles of the sun  
Or try in a sea-breeze the salt tang;  
Run like a dog before the storm  
Sniffing the windward, alive air;  
Talk barques and brigantines, buy  
Twist in sea-girt pubs,

Blow lightly up to shapely girls  
And talk of the Cutty Sark, the helm,  
The still, star-guiding night;  
Describe with zephyr voice  
The blossom-heavy Inland Sea,  
Or sound in shrill discordant tones  
The cries of doomed men—with rolling eyes  
And frantic hands he would bring jib,  
Mainmast, foretop and mizzen crashing,  
Stave in the hold, fling dozens overboard,  
And climb with six survivors  
Breathless, on a rock.

#### WISDOM

Could I set down this data and that trait  
Epitomise the whole majestical array  
Of present knowledge, claim my birth  
Had heralded the wisest man on earth,  
Then I were sad as those museum men  
Whose love is trapped in a fountain-pen.

But if I knew where true contentment lay  
Or knew what destiny must link the sky  
With disregarding man, could live one day  
As though I did not know I had to die  
Then I were wise as children are  
Who run to catch a falling star.

#### FIRST FEAR

My horizon was cut like ice  
The space within was freedom;  
Crawling on buckled legs  
Unsteady with carelessness  
I was so wise with innocence  
I never knew the moon.

Between the parted curtains in her room  
My mother showed me the moon  
And not even her breast's warmth  
Could soften the hard chill  
Nor her kisses quell the doubt  
Which lay with me in bed.

My horizon fell apart  
And I ran panicking for freedom  
Harnessed by this cold dread,  
Afraid of the world and for it,  
And in my head I beat about  
Like the endless sea.

#### TO A NEWBORN BABY—SEPTEMBER, 1944

If you had been born on a happier morning  
Only the leaves would now be falling  
But guns replied to your first cry  
And about the earth wherever men go  
They fall to that rending echo  
Announcing a major and minor tragedy.

Yet tragedy yours may not be  
For although thousands die hungry  
There is greater famine than want of bread  
And in your wise beyond wisdom head  
I think you know that it is love, are love,  
And the first motions of the winging dove.

#### THE CRY

Her husband away, her child at home in bed  
The political girl has gone to her secret meeting.

Must you intrigue with a new love? Must your agendas,  
Your memoranda, your resolutions fill  
The night hours? Is it better so to leave  
Rapture for the political future?  
The answer is in your daughter's cry  
Which fills the empty house with memory  
Of the last bird of summer bewailing winter's advent.

I know your intentions;  
Your pockets are filled with spring seed,  
Ceres in the night sowing a new life  
For her daughter's generation. What are her cries  
To the great cry torn out of Europe, out of  
These darkened days?

What are all cries  
But lamentation of sunset in the heart  
And in the skies?

The cry will outlast us all;  
When you are forty and the world is changed  
Your daughter's daughter will cry at night,  
Will rehearse laughter for the spring's  
Ripe repetition, and I shall measure the new world  
In brimming hearts and tear-filled eyes.

Is it not enough to have embraced at once  
Two loves, two hemispheres, one world  
Conjunctive in your circling arms? Must you  
Stride out in the night to set new meteors  
In violent flight?

They are but bird's wings  
In the firmament through which the moon  
Throws legends of unchanging change, hell  
And heaven inextricably woven in head and heart.

As your purposeful footsteps fall into night,  
Silence, my heart sinks, but my head knows  
You are right; the distance to your meeting  
Cannot be measured by a child's cry, or by  
My time-wandering, contemplative heart.  
The heart of the world moves with you, world  
With an end, world with an endless pain  
Which I accept, which you may change,  
But range as your mind may, will never conquer.  
As impossible as sun without rain, wrong without right,  
Would be her smile without her cry, who cries to-night.

#### ROGER BURFORD

Roger Burford began to be interested in the cinema when he was at Cambridge (1926) and from 1928 till the war was a professional script-writer, usually under contract to a film studio.

Between 1932 and 1936 he wrote six detective novels under the name of *Roger East* and three in collaboration with Oswell Blakeston under the joint pseudonym of *Simon*. In 1941 he joined the Films Division of the Ministry of Information as script editor, and in 1943 he was sent to Moscow as films representative. He spent two years there. Some sporadic literary work, other than films and detective novels, has appeared from time to time, the most notable being *Poems and Documents* (White and White : 1936). The justification for this book, he said at the time, was not in the quality of the poetry. He regarded it as a case-book, convenient because it was possible to print all his slight output of poetry for ten years. The 'documents' were suggestive deductions from the poems, aided by reflection, of his contemporary attitudes to the function of the artist —attitudes which he traced to the pressures of society.

For the present publication he has collected his work for the following nine or ten years. It is significant perhaps that the 'documents' which go with it are less personal, though they contain clues, and more dogmatic.

#### OSWELL BLAKESTON

#### MAX CHAPMAN

Oswell Blakeston's poems are: "The Arrogant Man," "Spectator," "Anti-Freud," "Problem," "The Enemy," "This Machine Age," "Good News For Slow Travellers," "Your Name," "Securitati Perpetuae," "Memo," "Black Out," "Pleasure Cruise," "String Quartet," "Man and Beast," "Contentment," "No Place Like Home," "Gipsy," "Sun In The South," "In Secret," "Fair Enough," "Central Heat," "Still Life," "Country Shot," "Cigarette," "Last Day," "Contrast," "Little Saga," "Winter Sowing," "Tryst," "How It Got There," "On Sunday," "Colour Note," "The Glove Of Skin," "Cri de Coeur," "Progress," "Innocence."

Max Chapman's poems are: "Corybantic," "Skin Tides," "The Veins Of Love," "Night Fruit," "As The Day Is," "Grotto," "Spring," "Novice," "Siamese Cat," "Cat," "Slight Torso," "Country At Spring," "Thumbnail," "As The Heart Is," "Change Of Heart," "Poem," "Confessional."

Oswell Blakeston has written criticism and fiction for various publications and several books including *Death While Swimming*, a poem illustrated by Len Lye. Other poems in: *Caravel*, *Delta*, *The Literary Review*, *Programme*, *New Oxford Outlook*, *The Twentieth Century*, *Phoebus Calling*, *Proems*, etc. Verse collected here has appeared in: *The New English Weekly*, *Life And Letters*, *The Westminster Magazine*, *New Vision*, Nancy Cunard's *Poems For France*, Harry Roskolenko's *Exiles' Anthology*, *The Bookman*, *Seed*. Several poems are printed for the first time.

Max Chapman is a painter who writes occasional verse. He has exhibited pictures in London, Spain, Cornwall, both in one-man shows and group exhibitions. Poems printed in *Now* and *The New English Weekly*. Several poems printed here for the first time.

#### PETER CHILVERS.

Peter Chilvers is a young poet who has only published two poems: one in *Now* and one in *GEN*.

#### SILVIA DOBSON

W. E. R. BELL

Silvia Dobson's poems are: "Fifth Dimension," "Dress Rehearsal, Spain, 1937," "Alms For Oblivion," "Ambulance Driver," "Thunderstorm," "Christmas Eve," "To Noel, Killed In An Air-raid," "The End Of The End Of The End," "The Patriots," "The Wine Of The South," "Prophecy," "The War Widow," "Venus In Scorpio," "Harpoon," "Dragon's Teeth," "Time Away," "At Inverarey," "The Housebreaker," "To

"The Sphinx," "Celestial Deception," "Faint Wisdom," "To Sylvia Townsend Warner," "Against Reality, Speaks Youth. And The Sage Replies," "Vindication," "Bedraggled Phoenix," "Adverse Aspects," "Threshold." W. E. R. Bell's poems are: "Secular Hymn," "Remember Standing At The Edge Of Life," "Afternoon School," "Dream 1," "They Plucked The Apple In The Early Garden," "Dream 8," "Calcutta 1," "Calcutta 2," Calcutta 3," "Kissing You When You Were Asleep," "A Room For Monica," "Dream 7," "To An Old Lady," "The Silver Birches," "Sonnet," "When All's Potential, Nothing Done."

Silvia Dobson is the author of *The Happy Philistine*, a novel which had a succès d'estime. This is the first collection of her poems.

W. E. R. Bell is a new poet.

#### MARK HOLLOWAY

This is the first time Mark Holloway has collected his poems. His work has appeared in: *Poets Of Tomorrow—11* (Hogarth), *Little Reviews Anthology, 1945, New Road, 1943*, *Poetry Quarterly, Poetry Folios, Modern Reading, Gangrel, Cambridge Front, Outlook*. Twelve of the poems in the present selection are printed for the first time.



